

Civic Identity Goals Frame A Warren Wilson College Education

Background

Warren Wilson College students participate in an innovative curriculum with scaffolded, sustainability-supportive learning outcomes that prepare them for purposeful lives dedicated to a just, equitable and sustainable world. Our mission directs us to educate for this purpose:

Warren Wilson College will be distinguished by an innovative approach that intentionally integrates applied learning and Academics within the liberal arts tradition. We are committed to providing an educational program that promotes curiosity, empathy, and integrity. We prepare graduates to engage in groundbreaking scholarship, pursue meaningful careers with professionalism, and lead purposeful lives dedicated to fostering a just, equitable, and sustainable world.

Since the College's earliest days as a Farm School in the early 1900's, fostering a commitment to civic responsibility and social conscience has been central to the mission of the institution. From desegregating the College before Brown vs. Board of Education to developing one of the early Environmental Studies programs in the country in the early 1980's, social justice and environmental responsibility have been cornerstones of Warren Wilson's educational leadership. In this context, and for more than fifty years, the College has continued to refine and to leverage the three fundamental elements of its pedagogy—Academics, Work and Community Engagement/Service.

Three years ago, a team of faculty and staff identified Civic Identity as the central outcome of Academics, Work and Community Engagement learning. They developed a potent set of overarching goals to further the synthesis of "triad" learning into common, measurable outcomes. Civic Identity goals serve now as the framework for a Warren Wilson education. Outcomes from Academics, Work and Community Engagement are scaffolded to support overarching Civic Identity outcomes. This model fosters greater integration of "triad" learning and provides the architecture for the institution to align outcomes, campus-wide, with the overall mission and purpose of a Warren Wilson College education. Civic Identity goals equip Warren Wilson graduates with critical knowledge of just what "a just, equitable, and sustainable world" means as well as undergraduate experience in working toward that outcome.

The concept of sustainability has evolved at Warren Wilson as a working ethos on the ground and, as a dynamic, interdisciplinary tool for critical inquiry. Though first applied to environmental concerns, today, the problems we choose to address with the sustainability-framed lens of environment, economics and social justice are broader. Warren Wilson graduates learn— theoretically and experientially—that in order to address such complex issues as climate change, food security, homelessness, or gender and racial inequities this interdisciplinary lens is essential.

Warren Wilson Model Fosters Sustainability-Centered Literacy

Fulfillment of our requirements for Civic Identity, Academics, Work and Community Engagement grounds students in the following sustainability-centered proficiencies (as articulated by AASHE):

- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the nature of systems.
- Students will have an understanding of their social responsibility as future professionals and citizens.

- Students will be able to accommodate individual differences in their decisions and actions and be able to negotiate across these differences.
- Students will be able to analyze power, structures of inequality, and social systems that govern individual and communal life.
- Students will be able to recognize the global implications of their actions.

Civic Identity Goals Synthesize Capstone Learnings

Civic Identity goals synthesize capstone learnings from Academics, Work and Community Engagement and are fulfilled through specific requirements from all three curricular components. Civic Identity goals follow:

A Warren Wilson graduate is prepared to engage in groundbreaking scholarship, pursue meaningful careers with professionalism, and lead purposeful lives dedicated to fostering a just, equitable and sustainable world. Grounded in carefully orchestrated participation in Academics, Work and Community Engagement graduates will possess these qualities:

- *Understanding of complex Issues in context*
- *Ability to effectively engage in a pluralistic setting*
- *Commitment to ethical integrity, justice and equity*
- *Collaborative problem-solving with diverse partners*

Academics, Work and Community Engagement: 3-D Immersion

Academics provides students with theoretical grounding, research skills, and opportunities for interdisciplinary inquiry (including Civic Identity-required, thematic courses designated Social Justice, Intercultural Perspectives, Environmental Responsibility, and Service Learning). All Warren Wilson graduates fulfill course requirements that support the following General Education outcomes:

An education not only brings knowledge, but also the skills to think through complicated real-world problems that arise in complex and diverse communities of which all people are a part. A Warren Wilson College education enables students to gain a clearer perspective on themselves and to better comprehend the perspectives of those around them. The General Education program includes scaffolded requirements that provide developmental guidance, while allowing students the flexibility to pursue their individual passions and approaches. Through experiential learning, students acquire knowledge, develop skills, and hone values that comprise their identity. Graduates participate broadly and effectively in the collaboration that is human culture and work collectively for a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

- **Writing Across the Curriculum:** *Communication is a crucial skill. Effective members of communities are able to navigate interactions with a variety of audiences using a variety of rhetorical purposes.*
- **Foundational Skills and Knowledge:** *Creative problem solvers have the tools for invention, synthesis, and imagination in unexpected contexts. To do this successfully as a community member, empathy is crucial, as is the ability to provide data-driven analyses and evaluation. Engagement with a variety of disciplines is critical for development of these tools; it also empowers students to become more aware of their passions and limitations. These requirements include engaging with-courses distributed across all academic divisions.*

- **Values of a Civic Identity:** *A strong civic identity requires a strong sense of one's values. At Warren Wilson College, we incorporate these values as Environmental Responsibility, Intercultural Understanding, Social Justice, and Service Learning. Exploration of values is a developmental process. Students engage with foundational- and Intermediate-level values courses that commit to ethical integrity, justice, and equality.*

The Work Program develops skills needed for effective engagement in a purposeful life. All Warren Wilson students serve on one of the College's eighty Work Crews and all are expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Professionalism/Work Ethic:** *Demonstrate personal accountability, effective Work habits, and commitment to the well-being of the community. This includes punctuality, dependability, preparedness for a given task, maintaining a balanced Workload, acting with integrity, promoting a culture of safety and respect, and the ability to learn from their mistakes.*
- **Critical Thinking/Problem Solving:** *Exercise sound and logical reasoning to identify, think through, and solve problems. This includes being able to organize information, knowing where to find available resources, the ability to think creatively and originally, awareness of and respect for time constraints, and the confidence to make decisions.*
- **Communication:** *Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly, effectively, and respectfully to individuals inside and outside of the Work crew. This includes clear and professional written communication, the ability to address others with intentionality, honesty, and confidence, understanding the impact of non-verbal cues, practicing active listening, and knowing how to clarify questions and ask for feedback.*
- **Teamwork/Collaboration:** *Build collaborative relationships with co-Workers and other individuals. This includes being open to new ideas and experiences, practicing active listening and communicating ideas in a respectful way, holding others accountable, committing to a fair distribution of labor, and participation as an actively involved and committed member of a group.*
- **Civic Identity:** *Describe how your Work on your crew educates and impacts how you choose to live in community.*

Community Engagement immerses students in real world experiences to prepare them for civic engagement. Each year, all Warren Wilson students participate in a structured program of Community Engagement with regional partners where they learn to effectively address the region's most pressing issues. In addition, they also complete internships and other service either while they are studying abroad on one of the College's immersive Study Away programs or perhaps in their home communities for the summer. Community Engagement goals are as follows:

- **Students Explore and Reflect** *on their interests, values, skills and self-awareness in a community context*
- **Understand:** *Students understand the complexity of a social or environmental issue through engagement and critical inquiry*
- **Impact:** *Students complete a signature Community Engagement experience by working towards a community goal in collaboration with a community partner*
- **Reflection:** *Students examine their capacity for and commitment to civic responsibility by reflecting on their Community Engagement*